

VERREAUX



BIG BAD

003



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What Was That?

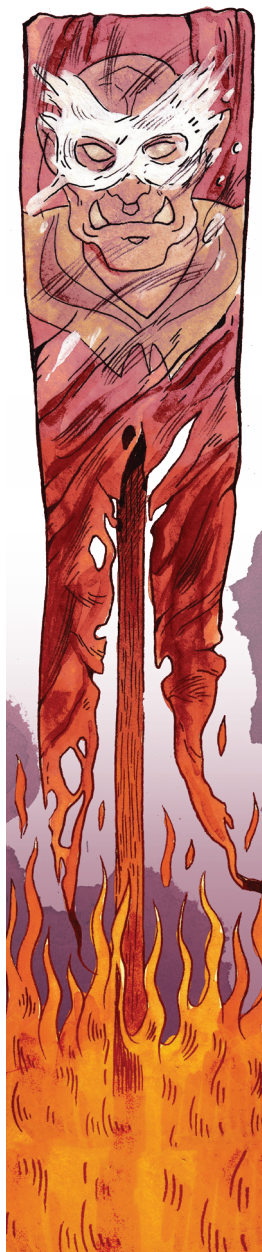
I'll tell you this: in all my years, I've only ever run from one fight. While working as a mercenary I encountered what I thought was a giant, but then I saw its beak and its feathers. And its axe. I'm not ashamed to say I ran without looking back, and I'd do so again.

VERREAUX, THE EXALTED OWLBEAR

An owlbear given sentience and self-awareness, Verreaux was born as part of an experiment in a lab of horrid aberrations. His earliest memories are of pain, iron cages, and the shrouded silhouettes of his mysterious creators. Lucky for Verreaux, his captors underestimated the owlbear—as their creation grew larger, they failed to reinforce his enclosure. Eventually, the owlbear managed to pry his cage open and escape. Unsure of himself and unfamiliar with the outside world, Verreaux struggled to survive on his own.

He was cunning, though, and took to stalking orcish caravans. He stole from the caravans and listened in on their conversations to teach himself their language. One day, as Verreaux went to pilfer a loaf of freshly baked bread, the warchief, Agnok, caught him. Thinking the odd creature nothing more than a mindless beast, Agnok went to strike the owlbear down. But, in eavesdropping on the orc's conversations, Verreaux had learned not just their language, but also their tactics. Rearing back on his hindlegs, Verreaux easily evaded the swing of the warchief's axe and struck Agnok a deadly blow. And when the orc priests raised weapons against him, Verreaux took up Agnok's axe and struck down all but one of them. The orcs, after witnessing the destruction of their mighty chief and most of their priests, believed the enormous owlbear to be a vengeful demigod—a notion Verreaux heartily encouraged. They bowed down to Verreaux, accepting him as both their new warchief and their god, and his reign of terror began in earnest.

Apotheosis. After a decade of Verreaux's leadership, his clan has thrived. They hold dominion over multiple territories, and several other clans offer fealty to Verreaux and his people. Though Verreaux is an owlbear, his ferocity and battle prowess have made him a god amongst the orc clans, and he gains power, food, and tribute from their worship. While his recognized divinity is far less than that of other gods, it does allow him to impart power on his followers and curses on his enemies. As his numbers increase so too does his power



**VIOLENCE
IS HIS
GOSPEL!**

and his pride, and other divine forces are turning their eyes to Verreaux. Should his twisted rise to godhood go unchecked, there is no telling what he may become capable of.

Conquering Horde. As the leader of a conquering horde, Verreaux has powerful resources at his beck and call. Even so, he enjoys being at the front line of battle, and his people cheer him on with drums and hymns extolling his prowess. He is usually surrounded by a squad of orc warriors whom he has carefully chosen to stand alongside him in battle, and they're willing to give their lives.

ROLEPLAYING VERREAUX

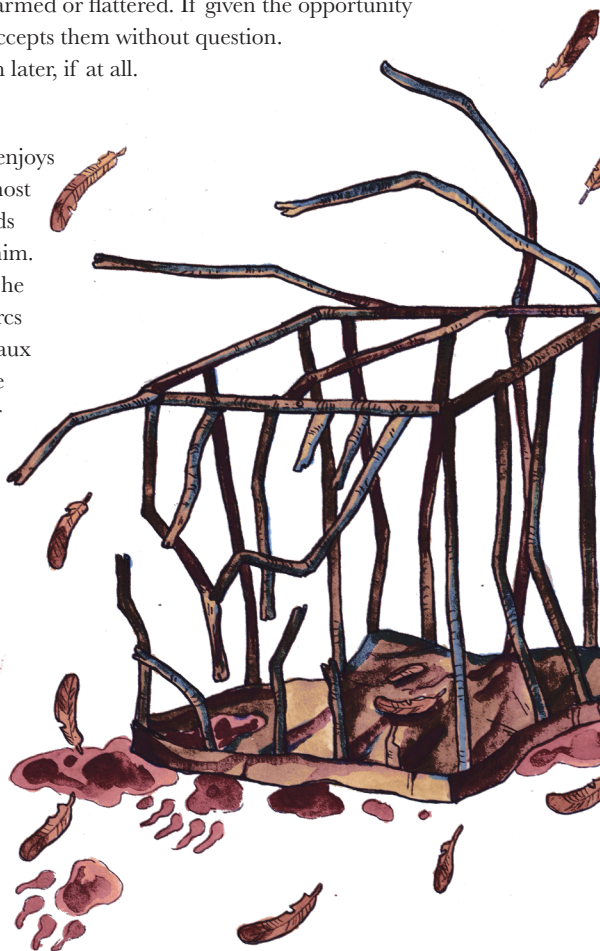
Years of glorification have convinced Verreaux that he is in fact a god, and with his devotees multiplying by the day, true ascension may very well be at hand. The orc hordes who serve him have worshipped him actively for the last decade, and he appears to be gaining divine power from their veneration. Secretly, Verreaux wonders about his origins, and he's enraged by the fact that he will never truly know why he was created.

While he attempts to restrain his anger around those who worship him, at times his rage causes him to kill an impertinent orc or two. His followers view this as righteous wrath, assuming that the person killed was unworthy or did something abhorrent to their living god. Deep down Verreaux feels small amounts of guilt when these unintentional deaths happen. However, he masks this with more anger.

Never charming, polite, or willing to debate or negotiate, Verreaux views such things as beneath him. He has no carnal desire and cannot be charmed or flattered. If given the opportunity to incorporate other beings into his horde, he accepts them without question. Verreaux swings first and listens to queries much later, if at all.

VERREAUX'S TACTICS

Verreaux charges headlong into combat. He enjoys the glory of leading his horde and attacks the most powerful figure amongst his foes first. If he needs distractions, he calls in his warriors to support him. Though he hates to retreat, he will disengage if he feels like he is losing the upper hand, pushing orcs into the breach so he has time to recover. Verreaux likes to send out hunters, snipers, and spies if he is up against an army larger than his own. After determining his enemy's weak points he leads targeted raids, attempting to demoralize the opposing force. If Verreaux determines that a force is too strong for his horde, he will never admit it—to himself or anyone. Instead, he scours the land for a weaker region to conquer and raze to show his strength. A victory is a victory to Verreaux, no matter how unfair the fight might be.



VERREAU'S TRAITS

Ideal. "I will dominate the world and prove I am much more than an experiment."

Bond. "Settling the petty issues of the orc tribes ensures their loyalty, as does proving I can destroy them all if they step out of line."

Flaw. "I am a GOD! I will not be treated like a simple being or one of lesser status."

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Stop the God's Advance. An exiled member of Verreaux's horde seeks out support to end the owlbear's bloody rampage. She believes bringing evidence that Verreaux's creators are dead will dissuade him from further attacks.

A Missing Pet. A lurching figure with an ever-shifting form approaches a group of adventurers peacefully. It asks them to assist it in recovering a powerful creature that it created long ago. That creature is Verreaux.

Holy Intervention. An angel, sent by the local pantheon, appears to the party and beseeches them to help stop Verreaux's ascension.

A PLACE OF WORSHIP

Traveling Altar. Verreaux keeps a large tent in the center of his tribe's war camps. His guards are staged around the tent while camped, even when Verreaux is not inside. When the clan is on the move, this tent is packed in its own cart and protected. Wherever the clan settles, an altar is established outside Verreaux's tent, and his supplicants leave trinkets, food, and random gifts there on a regular basis. He's particularly fond of baked goods and cakes.

Hordes of Orcs. At any given time, there are between three thousand and five thousand orcs serving in Verreaux's horde. The fluctuation is due to deaths, new converts, and the integration of other hordes. Verreaux's clan includes spirit workers, warriors, and the wondrous skalds of orc tradition. With such a diverse congregation, Verreaux can call on various sources of power to handle specific challenges that cannot be dealt with by mere brute force.



OF THE FOOLISH & THE FAITHFUL

Great Verreux was born from the bones and blood of conquered gods. He came to us speaking of a place where the shattered pieces of defeated deities were reassembled, their most powerful qualities stitched together, into Verreux. At first, we foolish orcs believed Verreux was simply a beast, a brute of no greater brains or authority than any other creature of the woods. Even after seeing the monstrous owlbear destroy our warchief, we still didn't believe. And so we priests challenged Verreux and were summarily struck down. The prayers to our gods fell on deaf ears. Our spells were uttered in vain.

After losing my left hand in that ill-advised attack, and seeing my fellow priests fall, I saw the light and threw myself before our lord's feet, begging forgiveness for my ignorance and my lack of faith. He did not kill me for failing to recognize his divinity, as he should have. Instead, our great god blessed me. I was healed, and more than that, I grew stronger.

Since that day I have followed Verreux into countless battles. I have felt his blessings, and I have seen them bestowed on others.

Before we march into battle we beg Verreux's favor. Our benediction is this: those who face Verreux will bear witness to his power, they will see the truth of our lord's absolute divinity, and they will understand the blessings he can offer his faithful followers.

Homily of Grandak,
High Priest of Verreux



PAYING TRIBUTE TO VERREAU

Offerings to Verreaux come in many forms. Severed limbs are a common offering, as the orc horde take these trophies from felled enemies on the battlefield and bring them to Verreaux for blessing. Ideas for offerings can be found below:

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| 1 | A bushel of fresh fruit and vegetables |
| 2 | An icon of an axe made of silver |
| 3 | Ears, fingers, and toes |
| 4 | Golden feathers |
| 5 | The beaks of ten birds |
| 6 | Cutted eels |
| 7 | Twelve broken weapons |
| 8 | Large owl skulls with runes carved into them |
| 9 | A dozen freshly baked tarts |
| 10 | A whole and worthy weapon |

LAIR ACTIONS

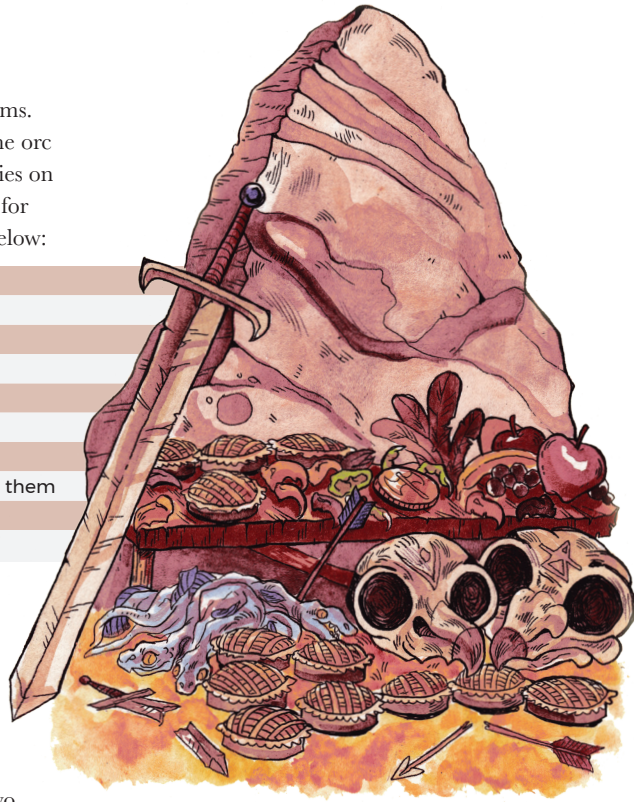
When fighting with his horde, Verreaux can invoke his authority to take lair actions. On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), Verreaux can take a lair action to cause one of the following effects. He can't use the same lair action two rounds in a row:

- Verreaux calls in 2d10 **orcs** as support in a fight. They enter combat on his initiative, but they wait for his call before attacking, even if it looks like Verreaux might lose. Verreaux can use this lair action twice per day.
- Drawing on the exaltation of his worshipers, Verreaux bestows a curse on all enemies within 60 feet of him. All targets within range must succeed on a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw or be at disadvantage on all attacks until the end of Verreaux's next turn.
- Verreaux restores the 1st-level spells of an allied cleric within 120 feet of him. The cleric must use a reaction for this effect to occur, which is spent praying to Verreaux. This can only be used to benefit one cleric once per day.

REGIONAL EFFECTS

When the horde conquers a territory, they cause minor ecological havoc to the region:

- The horde targets crops and herds within a 10-mile radius, making food and supplies scarce for everyone else. Inns have only basic meals, and ale supplies in taverns are dried up. Smaller settlements may even suffer starvation.
- Orc raiding parties make it difficult to move through or around any territory they occupy, causing travelers to take five times longer to pass through any region under Verreaux's control.
- Verreaux's unnatural rise to godhood and profane aura has a negative effect on divine spell casters within 5 miles of his location. Clerics, Paladins, and any other creatures that receive spells from a divine source that cast a spell of 2nd-level or lower must make a DC 10 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, the spell is not cast, and they lose the spell slot with no effect. This does not impact worshippers of Verreaux.





VERREAUX'S CHOSEN

Medium humanoid (orc), neutral

Armor Class 12 (hide armor)
Hit Points 16 (3d8 + 3)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)

Skills Intimidation +4, Religion +2

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages Common, Orc

Challenge ½ (100 XP)

Aggressive. As a bonus action, the chosen can move up to its speed toward a hostile creature that it can see.

Spellcasting. The chosen is a 3rd-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). The chosen has the following cleric spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *guidance, sacred flame, thaumaturgy*

1st level (3 slots): *bane, command, cure wounds, inflict wounds*

2nd level (2 slots): *aid, hold person*

ACTIONS

Greataxe. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d12 + 2) slashing damage.

VERREAU

EXALTED OWLBEAR
HUGE MONSTROSITY, LAWFUL EVIL

Armor Class 19 (+1 *plate armor*)
Hit Points 171 (18d10 + 72)
Speed 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22 (+6)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws Con +8, Wis +5

Skills Intimidation +5, Perception +5, Religion +5

Damage Resistances bludgeoning

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages Orc, Sylvan

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Keen Sight and Smell. Verreaux has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight or smell.

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If Verreaux fails a saving throw, he can choose to succeed instead.

Special Equipment. Verreaux wears +1 *plate armor* and carries *Verreaux's Gospel*, a weapon specially crafted from the melted remains of Agnok's—the former warchief—axe. It acts like a +1 *greataxe*. Once per day, a creature attuned to *Verreaux's Gospel* can negate the effects of anything against which they have failed a saving throw. The creature also gains advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks. Bonuses from these items are already reflected in Verreaux's stat block.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Verreaux makes two attacks: one with his axe and one with his beak.

Beak. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 11 (1d10 + 6) piercing damage.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 10 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 15 (2d8 + 6) slashing damage.

Verreaux's Gospel. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 26 (3d12 + 7) slashing damage.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

Verreaux can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. Verreaux regains spent legendary actions at the start of his turn.

Detect. Verreaux makes a Wisdom (Perception) check.

Rend. Verreaux makes a Claw attack and a Beak attack.

Squawk. By screeching, Verreaux drives fear into the hearts of others. All foes within 120 feet of Verreaux that can hear him must succeed on a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened of him until the end of his next turn.



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